



Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Child Safety System

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.25 pm): The Crisafulli LNP government promised Queenslanders a child safety system that would protect our most vulnerable children. They promised transparency. They promised that when signs appeared, this Crisafulli LNP government would act. Instead, nearly 18 months on, the system is not safer; it is more fragile, more opaque and more unstable than it was before. When it comes to child safety, instability is not an administrative problem; it is a risk to children.

Minister Camm turned on an IT system that an independent audit found was 'unfinished'. The minister finally conceded the Crisafulli LNP government's responsibility for the go live. That is right; it was turned on by this minister unfinished, poorly tested and missing critical functions. Frontline workers raised the alarm early. They warned senior leadership that the system was not ready. Those warnings were ignored. The consequences were not theoretical: intake work slowed, backlogs exploded, response times became unknowable and undeniable. Almost 40,000 children were flagged as being left in unsafe environments.

The minister herself admitted the gravity of that failure, conceding that without a doubt there were children put at greater risk for a period of time. That admission alone should have triggered urgent transparency and accountability. Instead, Queenslanders got silence. The minister said she was not told. The director-general says the system was rushed to save money. RTI documents show frontline staff warned leadership months before the rollout. A staff survey rated the system 1.79 out of 10. Executives were removed. Leadership was reshuffled, but the director-general remained and the minister has remained. Then something unprecedented happened. For the first time in more than a decade Queensland stopped publicly reporting child protection data—no data on how many children have been harmed, no data on how long it takes to respond to abuse allegations and no data on how many children are currently in care. That data blackout has now lasted 11 months. Even the Queensland Family and Child Commission have raised the alarm. Queenslanders are being asked to trust a system they are no longer allowed to see while children remain at risk.

This government made clear election commitments on child safety. According to the Crisafulli LNP government's child safety report card from Tom Allsop, the outgoing CEO of PeakCare, the sector's peak body, residential care was meant to stop growing—and it has not; the number of child safety officers was meant to increase by 20 per cent—the figures are unclear and unreported; a professional foster care model was promised—it has not been delivered; transparency was promised—but the data has vanished. Mr Allsop put it plainly: we should be in a better place but we are not.

On the front line, morale is at rock bottom. Workers are reporting dangerous workloads, psychological stress and a fear of speaking up. Leadership instability continues, with constant acting appointments and departures as late as last Friday.

This is not a stable system and it is not a safe system. During the height of this crisis, Queenslanders learned something else: the minister stopped fronting the media because she was overseas on safari. While her electorate was dealing with a cyclone and while child safety data was being withheld, her explanation was that she needed a holiday. No-one denies that ministers are humans, but child safety is not a portfolio that pauses. It does not take leave. It does not wait for convenient timing. Our children do not get a holiday from being abused. When children are at risk when a department is falling apart at the seams, leadership must be present. It is essential. The minister must be present.

That is why leading child safety advocates are calling for the Premier to step in. They say that the system is worse than it was a year ago, that transparency has evaporated and that confidence in the minister has been lost. The Premier promised Queenslanders that underperforming ministers would not last. This is not about politics. This is not about pointscore. It is about the children who rely on this system to keep them safe. They deserve a system that is honest, that is stable, that is transparent and that is worthy of their trust and their protection.